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# ORION,

AND

OTHER POEMS.

BY

CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS.



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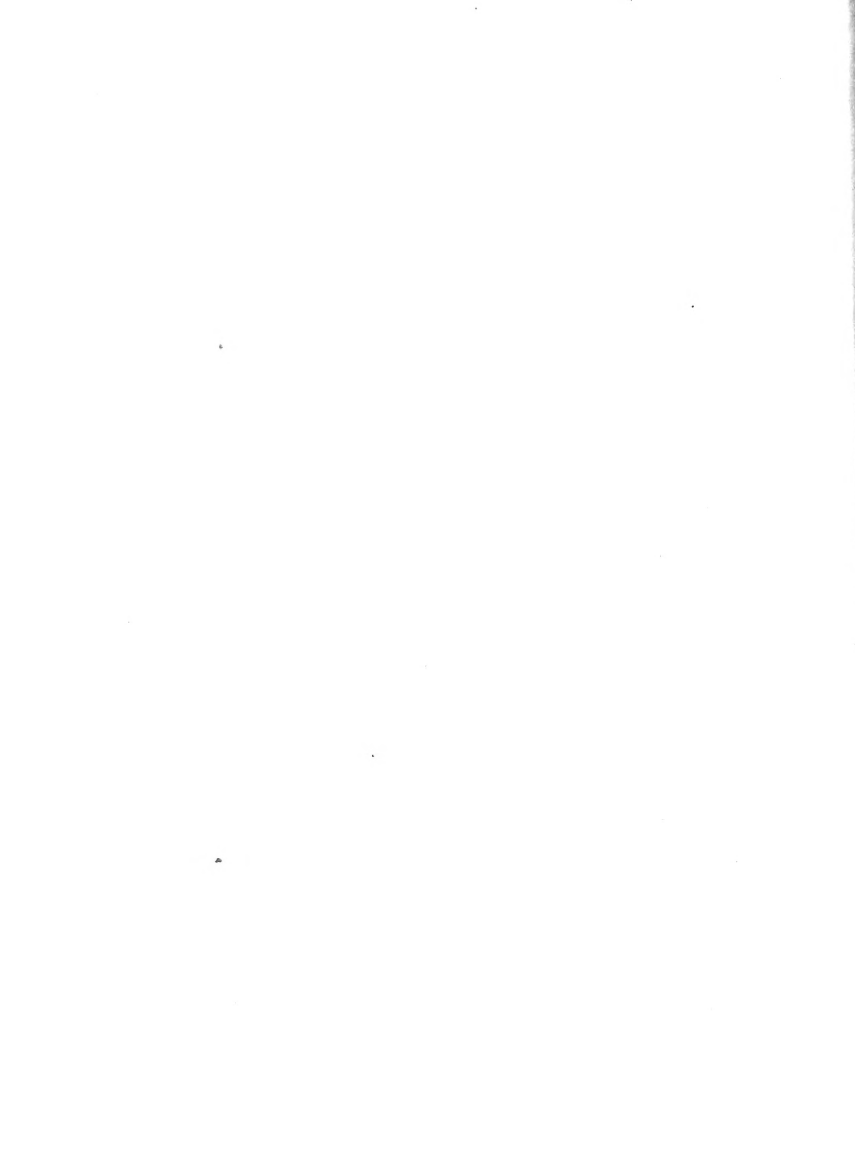
1880

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H.M. 1852. 45,

TO  
REV. G. GOODRIDGE ROBERTS, M.A.,  
MY FATHER AND DEAREST FRIEND,  
THESE FIRST-FRUITS  
ARE DEDICATED.



Ὡ φίλε Πάν, τε καὶ ἄλλοι ὅσοι τῆδε Θεοί, δοίητε μοὶ καλῶ  
γενέσθαι τᾶνδοθεν.



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## TO THE SPIRIT OF SONG.

---

WHITE as fleeces blown across the hollow heaven  
Fold on fold thy garment wraps thy shining limbs ;  
Deep thy gaze as morning's flamed thro' vapors riven,  
Bright thine hair as day's that up the ether swims.  
Surely I have seen the majesty and wonder,  
Beauty, might, and splendor of the soul of song ;  
Surely I have felt the spell that lifts asunder  
Soul from body, when lips faint and thought is strong ;  
Surely I have heard  
The ample silence stirred  
By intensest music from no throat of bird :—  
Smitten down before thy feet  
From the paths of heaven sweet,  
Lowly I await the song upon my lips conferred.





## ORION.

Two mighty arms of thunder-cloven rock  
Stretched ever westward toward the setting sun,  
And took into their ancient scarred embrace  
A laughing valley and a crooning bay.  
The gods had stilled them in their primal throes,  
And broken down their writhed extremities  
Sheer to the open sea. And now pine-belts  
And strayed fir-copses lined their shaggy sides ;  
And inland toward the island's quiet heart  
White torrents cleft the screens, and answered each  
To other from the high cliffs closer drawn,  
Kept ever brimming from eternal caves  
In azure deeps of snow, and feeding full  
A strong, swift river. And the river flowed  
With tumult, till it caught the mighty speech  
Rolled upward from the ocean, when it paused,  
And hushed its rapid song in reverence,  
And wound slow-footed through the summer vale,  
And met its sovereign with majestic calm.

The sunset with its red and purple skirts  
Hung softly o'er the bay, whose rippled breast  
Flushed crimson, and the froth-streaks round the beach  
Were glowing pink. The sands burned ruddy gold,  
And foot-marks crossing them lay sharp and black.  
A flood of purple glory swept the shores,  
And spread upon the vineyards, and the groves  
Of olives round the river-banks, and clothed  
The further matted jungles ; whence it climbed  
The ragged scaurs and jagg'd ravines, until  
It lay a splendor on the endless snow.

Where the slow swirls were swallowed in the tide,  
Some stone-throws from the stream's mouth, there the  
    sword  
Stretched thick and starry from the ridge's foot  
Down to the waves' wet limits, scattering off  
Across the red sand level stunted tufts  
Of yellow beach-grass, whose brown panicles  
Wore garlands of blown foam. Amidst the slope  
Three sacred laurels drooped their dark-green boughs  
About a high-piled altar. There the king,  
Cenopion, to whose sceptre bowed with awe  
The people dwellers in the steep-shored Chios,  
Stood praying westward ; in his outstretched hand  
The griding knife, well whetted, clothed with dread.

The royal priest's dark tresses, made aware  
Of coming winter by some autumn snows,  
Hung down his blue-dyed mantle, which he girt  
Up seemly for the sacrifice ; a beard,  
Short, black, and silken, clothed his lips and chin ;  
Beneath deep brows his keen eyes lurked half hid,  
And never rested : now they drank the stream  
Poured from the fiery sunset's sunken springs.  
A supplication moved his silent lips,  
Swift-winged to seek Apollo, and beseech  
Regard unto the rites e'en now begun.  
Anon he dropped his arm ; and straight the youths,  
Chosen of Chios' fairest race, upbore  
The victim to the pile,—a tawny wolf,  
Blood-stained, fast bound in pliant withes, fed fat  
On many a bleating spoil of careless folds,  
His red tongue lolling from his fangéd jaws,  
His eyes, inflamed, shrinking with terror and hate,  
His withren sinews strained convulsively.

Meanwhile from out a neighbor gorge, which spake  
Rough torrent-thunders through its cloak of pines,  
Along the shore came one who seemed to wear  
The grandeur of the mountains for a robe,  
The torrent's strength for girdle, and for crown  
The sea's calm for dread fury capable,—

A Hunter laden with the spotted pride  
Of kingly beasts before not dared of men,—  
And stood without the laurels' sacred shade,  
Which his large presence deepened. When the knife  
Let blood well-pleasing to Apollo forth  
The victim's gasping throat,—who yet cried not,  
But glared still hate upon his murderers  
And died uncraven,—then the Hunter bent  
His godlike head with awe unto the gods,  
And so kept bowed, the while the King drew forth  
Wine from a full skin-bottle nigh and poured  
A beaded, dark libation. Then he raised  
His head again,—like a tall pine that bends  
Unto a sudden blast, and so keeps bent  
Some moments, till the tempest passes by,—  
And cast his burden down before the King,  
And said,—

“With skins of lions, leopards, bears,  
Lynxes, and wolves, I come, O King, fulfilling  
My pledge, and seeking the delayed fulfilling  
Of some long hopes. For now the mountain lairs  
Are empty, and the valley folds secure.  
The inland jungles shall be vexed no more  
With muffled roarings through the cloudy night,  
And heavy splashings in the misty pools.  
The echo-peopled crags shall howl no more

With hungry yelpings 'mid the hoary firs.  
The breeding ewe in the thicket will not wake  
With wolves' teeth at her throat, nor drinking bull  
Bellow in vain beneath the leopard's paw.  
Your maidens will not fear to quit by night  
Their cottages to meet their shepherd lads ;  
And these shall leave safe flocks, and have no need  
Of blazing fagots. Nor without some toils  
Are these things so. For mighty beasts did yield  
Their ornament up most reluctantly ;  
And some did grievous battle. But the pledge  
And surety of a blissful harborage,  
Whither through buffets rude I needs must fare,  
Made heavy labors light. And if, hard pressed,  
My knees perchance waxed faint, or mine eyes dim,  
The strong earth stayed me, and the unbowed hills,  
The wide air, and the ever-joyous sun,  
And free sea leaping up beneath the sun,—  
All were to me for kindly ministrants,  
And lent glad service to their last-born,—man,  
Whom, reverent, the gods, too, favored well.  
And if to me, sleepless, alone, by night  
Came phantoms from polluted spots, and shades  
Unfettered, wavering round my cliff-edged couch,  
Fain to aghast me ; them I heeded not,  
As not worth heed. For there the deep-eyed Night

Looked down on me ; unflagging voices called  
From unpent waters falling ; tireless wings  
Of long winds bare me tongueless messages  
From star-consulting, silent pinnacles ;  
And breadth, and depth, and stillness fathered me.  
But now, O King, seeing I have at cost  
Of no slight labor done thy rugged hest,  
And seeing hard strife should win sweet favors, grant  
The good long wrought for, that amid the groves  
And sunny vineyards I may drink deep draughts  
Of Love's skilled mixing, and of sweet mouth's gift  
Of maiden-lipped, snow-breasted Merope."

So sped the wingéd words. And thus the King,  
CEnopion, to whose sceptre bowed with awe  
The people, dwellers in the steep-shored Chios :  
"Great honor hast thou won and shalt possess,  
And I will pay thee to the uttermost.  
Thy couch this night be softer, and more blest  
Thy visions,"—but in subtlety he spake,  
And went apart a little from the place,  
And filled with sullen wine two cups, well wrought.  
But one he tintured with a Colchian drug  
And gave his guest to drink, with honeyed words,  
But crooked, serpent-smooth,—“Drink this, in pledge  
Of those deep draughts for which thou art athirst.

And now I go to bid the maid be glad  
And make all ready. Rest thee here with these,  
And I will come and fetch thee." And he went  
Up from the shore and in among the vines,  
Until his mantle gleamed athwart the lanes  
Of sunset through the far, gray olive-groves.  
The Hunter turned, and heeded not the men,  
But went apart close by the sleepless sea  
And sat him down, because his eyes were dim,  
And his head heavy, and his sinews faint.

And now it was about the set of sun,  
And the west sea-line with its quivering rim  
Had hid the sun-god's curls. A sanguine mist  
Crept up, and to the Hunter's heavy eyes  
Became as if his eyes were filled with blood.  
He guessed the traitorous cup, and his great heart  
Was hot, his throat was hot ; but heavier grew  
His head, and he sank back upon the sand,  
Nor saw the light go out across the sea,  
Nor heard the eagle scream among the crags,  
Nor stealthy laughter echo up the shore,  
Nor the slow ripple break about his feet.

The deep-eyed Night drew down to comfort him,  
And lifted her great lids and mourned for him,  
Foreknowing all his woe, and herself weak

To bend for him the indomitable fates ;  
And heavier dews wet all the trees and fields ;  
And sighs cool-drawn from infinite wells of space  
Breathed round him ; and from forth the unbowed hills  
Came strength, and from the ocean essences  
And influences to commune with him,  
But found his spirit blind, and dumb, and deaf,  
Not eager and expectant, as of old,  
At every portal of the sleepless mind.

But hark ! what feet are these that stir the vines  
Beneath the big, sweet-smelling grape-clusters ?  
What feet are these that leave the muffling grass  
And crush the shingle sharply up the beach ?  
Out of the foamless sea a heavy fog  
Steamed up, rolled in on all the island shores,  
But heavier, denser, like a cloak, where lay  
The Hunter ; and the darkness gathered thick,  
More thick the fog and darkness where he lay,—  
Like as a mother folds more close her child  
At night when sudden street-brawl jars her dreams.  
But now the folding vapors veiled him not,  
The ineffectual darkness hid him not,  
For one came with the King and bare a torch,  
And stood beside the Hunter where he lay ;  
And all the darkness shuddered and fled back



Sullenly into the grim-visaged crags,  
Beneath their battered foreheads ; and the fog  
Crept up a chilly horror round the King,  
Made huge the writhed and frowning mountain-brows,  
Till cliff, and cloud, and chaos of thick night  
Toppled about the place, and each small sound  
Of footstep or of stealthy whisper rang  
Tortured and shrill within the cavernous hollows.  
Before the King, before the torch-bearer,  
Stood one beside the Hunter's head,—a slave  
Beside the god-begotten,—and he bare  
Back with one arm his cloak, and in his hand  
He bare a cup—with suchlike juice in it  
As slew Alcmena's son—above the face,  
The strong, white, godlike face, more deathly white  
Even than death ; then into each close lid  
He dropped the poison with a loathing hand,  
While he whose light made manifest the deed  
Wincd in his eyes and saw not, would not see,  
Those eyes that knew not of their light gone out.  
And heavy drops stood forth on all the rocks,  
And ocean moaned unseen beneath the fog ;  
But the King laughed—not loud—and drew his cloak  
Closer about him, and went up the beach,  
And they two with him.

Now the fog rolled back

And a low moon came out across the sea,  
 And o'er the sea flocked out the pasturing stars,  
 And still he lay upon the trodden sand,  
 And still the ripple brake about his feet.  
 So moved the burdened hours toward the dawn ;  
 But suddenly their burden was forgot,  
 For music welled from out the throbbing waves,  
 And melody filled all the silver air.  
 And silver shoulders under wondrous gold  
 Of dripping tresses brake the shining waste  
 Whence came the maids beloved of Doris, fair  
 As stars and lovely for the stars to see,  
 And stood and mourned about the Hunter there,—  
 And curséd were his eyes that could not see.  
 And had he seen as grievous were his case,  
 Blinded with love and stricken with delight.  
 So came they weeping, and their yellow hair  
 Fell round them, while they smote their lyres, and  
 sang :

“ O god-begotten

Strophe A.

    And dear to all the gods !

        For thee quick-dropping tears

            Make heavy our eyes and hot.

Be he of gods forgotten

    That smote thee, their gifts as rods

        To scourge him all his years,

            Sparing him not.

“ For thee the long-heaving Antistrophe A.  
 Ocean, fruitful of foam,  
     Groaned in his depths and was sore  
     Troubled, grieving for thee.  
 Grew Clotho sick of her weaving,  
 And the fury of storms that come  
     Out of the wilderness hoar  
     Went pitying thee.

“ For thee the all-bearing Strophe B.  
 Mother, the bountiful Earth,  
     Who hath borne no fairer son  
     In her kindly bosom and broad,  
 Will not be comforted, wearing  
 Thy pain like her labor of birth,  
     And hath veiled her in vapors as one  
     Stricken down, overawed.

“ For thee the all-covering Antistrophe B.  
 Night, the comforting mother,  
     Wept round thee pitifully  
     Nor withheld her compassionate hands ;  
 And sleep from her wings low-hovering  
 Fell kindly and sweet to no other  
     Between the unharvested sky  
     And the harvested lands.

“ We all are made heavy of heart, we weep with thee, sore with  
 thy sorrow,—  
 The Sea to its uttermost part, the Night from the dusk to the morrow,

The unplumbed spaces of Air, the unharnessed might of the Wind,  
The Sun that outshaketh his hair before his incoming, behind  
His outgoing, and laughs, seeing all that is, or hath been, or shall  
be,

The unflagging Waters that fall from their well-heads soon to the  
sea,

The high Rocks barren at even, at morning clothed with the rime ;  
The strong Hills propping up heaven, made fast in their place for  
all time ;

Withal the abiding Earth, the fruitful mother and kindly,  
Who apportions plenty and dearth, nor withholds from the least  
thing blindly,

With suchlike pity would hide thy reverent eyes indeed  
Wherewith the twin Aloides fain she would hide at their need :  
But they withstood not Apollo, they brake through to Hades,  
o'erthrown ;

But thee the high gods follow with favor, kind to their own ;  
For of thee they have lacked not vows, nor yellow honey, nor oil,  
Nor the first fruit red on the boughs, nor white meal sifted with toil,  
Nor gladdening wine, nor savor of thighs with the fat burned  
pure,—

Therefore now of their favor this ill thing shall not endure ;  
It endures but a little, seeing the gods make ready their mercy,  
Giving for thy well-being a skilfuller goddess than Circe,  
For the putting away of thy trouble, the setting far off of thy pain,  
And she shall repay thee double, making thy loss thy gain.  
But come, for the night fulfils, the gray in the sky gives warning ;—  
*Then get thee up to the hills and thou shalt behold the MORNING.*”

The Hunter stirred ; and all the long gray shore  
Lay empty, and the ripple whispered not,

Awed by the wide-spread silence. Then he rose,  
Groping, and strove to put aside the night  
That clung beneath his eyelids,—till he knew,  
And his whole heart sank, knowing. Then his voice  
Broke thus from out his utter misery  
(The while a sound went,—“Get thee up to the hills;  
Thou shalt behold the morning;” but he heard not):  
“Oh, black night, black forever! No light forever!  
Oh, long, long night, just fallen to hang forever,  
Never to break nor lighten! Whose the heart  
That dared it? Whose the hateful thought? What  
hand

Wrought me this curse, dealt me this ruin, this woe  
Unutterable, pitiless, unmeasured,—  
Put out my light, portioned me night forever?  
Oh ye that die not, ye that suffer not,  
Gods that are mindful, seeing good and evil!  
If ever unto you have risen a savor  
Acceptable, of honey, and oil, and wine,  
Me offering; and if a frequent smoke  
Have circled up to heaven from me to you  
Acceptable, of spotless hecatombs;  
And if from vows fulfilled and reverence  
Be favor in your sight,—then hear my prayer,  
And soon be it accomplished: let the hand  
Wither that wrought me this, the brain that planned

Rave and henceforth be mocked and plagued of devils,  
Let every good be turned for him to gall,  
And those his heart most cherishes become  
A horror, till he flee from them as fiends.  
But is this pain forever, this my night  
Eternal? Thou that mad'st the day and night,  
Make thou a day for me! O Earth, my mother,  
All bountiful, all pitiful, take heed  
Into what evil on thy breast hath fallen  
Thy son! O sleepless sea, behold my woe!  
O air all-folding, stars immovable,  
With everlasting contemplation wise,  
Know ye no remedy? Forests and fields,  
Tempests untiring, streams, and steadfast hills,  
Flame-riven caverns, hear me, for ye know me!  
Tell me; I hearken." And his bended head  
Besought the rocks.

“Thou shalt behold the morning,”

Brake clearly on the ample-bosomed silence,  
And straight begot as many widening waves  
As doth a pebble on a resting lake.  
The echoes hurtled inland, startling all  
The olive-groves and vineyards, rippling up  
The green foot-hills, and lapping faint and low  
About the low fir-copses; then they reached  
The upper gorges, dying in that region,—

Region of sounding pines and cataracts  
Impregnable to silence. Then, again,  
Even in the lifting of his head, and making  
Thanksgiving with mute lips, clear, far, and fine,  
Out of the vaporous raiment round their tops  
Came comfort from the hills:

“Up to the hills;  
Thou shalt behold the morning!”

Then he bowed  
With godlike reverence, reverencing the gods  
And ancient powers that watched him, and made quick  
His sense to their communion.

Now a sound  
Of hammers rose behind a jagged cape  
Not many paces hence, with windy roar  
Of new-awakened fire. With pain and toil,  
Groping and staggering, hands, and knees, and feet  
Bruised with the crags, and faint, he came where men  
Wrought arms and forged the glowing bronze for war.  
There one came forth to meet him; him he took  
Upon his kingly shoulder, and him bade  
Of courtesy to be to him for eyes,  
To guide his feet that quickly he might fare  
To the hill-crests, or ere the fiery flower  
Of dawn bloomed fully.

So they two went thus

Up from the sombre, bitter-breathing sea,  
Beside the river, o'er the slumbrous sward  
Gossamer-spread, dew-drenched, and in among  
The vineyards and the olives. 'The fresh earth  
Heavy about his feet, the bursting wealth  
Of big grape-bunches, and the cool, green coils  
Of dripping vines breathed richly. Swift they moved  
'Mid gnarléd trunks and still, gray stretch of leaves,  
Without a sound save of wet twigs snapped dully  
Or flit of startled bird. And now their way  
They kept with toil, fallen on toilsome ways,—  
Up shattered slopes half-clothed with juniper,  
Through ragged-floored ravines, whose blasted scars  
Held mighty pines root-fast in their black depths,  
Still climbing, till a keen wind met them full  
From eastward breathed, free-scented from the brine.  
His laboring feet stood still, and while his lips  
Drank the clear wind, his guide, descending home,  
Left him alone facing the gates of dawn.

The cliffs are rent, and through the eternal chasm  
A far-heard moan of many cataracts,  
With nearer, ceaseless murmur of the pines,  
Came with the east wind, whilst the herald gold  
From cloven pinnacles on either hand  
On gradual wings sank to that airy glen ;



And many-echoed dash of many waves  
Rose dimly from the cliff-base where they brake,  
Far down, unseen ; and the wide sea spread wan  
In the pale dawn-tide, limitless, unportioned—  
Aye sentinelled by these vast rocky brows  
Defaced and stern with unforgotten fires.

But he, intent, leaned toward the gates of dawn  
With suppliant face, unseeing, and the wind  
Blew back from either brow his hair and cooled  
His eyes that burned with that so foul dishonor  
Late wrought upon them, whispering many things  
Into his inmost soul. Sudden the day  
Broke full. The healing of its radiance fell  
Upon his eyes, and straight his sightless eyes  
Were opened. All the morning's majesty  
And mystery of loveliness lay bare  
Before him ; all the limitless blue sea  
Brightening with laughter many a league around,  
Wind-wrinkled, keel-uncloven, far below ;  
And far above the bright sky-neighboring peaks ;  
And all around the broken precipices,  
Cleft-rooted pines swung over falling foam,  
And silver vapors flushed with the wide flood  
Of crimson slanted from the opening east  
Well ranked, the vanguard of the day,—all these

Invited him, but these he heeded not.  
For there beside him, veiled in a mist  
Where—through the enfolded splendor issued forth,—  
As delicate music unto one asleep  
Through mist of dreams flows softly,—all her hair  
A mist of gold flung down about her feet,  
Her dewy, cool, pink fingers parting it  
Till glowing lips, and half-seen snowy curves  
Like Parian stone, unnerved him, waited SHE,—  
Than Circe skilfuller to put away  
His pain, to set his sorrow afar off,—  
Eos, with warm heart warm for *him*. His toils  
Endured in vain, his great deeds wrought in vain,  
His bitter pain, CEnopion's house accurst,  
And even his sweet revenge, he recked not of;  
But gave his heart up straightway unto love.

Now Delos lay a great way off, and thither  
They two rejoicing went across the sea.  
And under their swift feet, which the wave kissed  
But wet not,—for Poseidon willed it so,  
Honoring his son,—and all along their way  
Was spread a perfect calm. And every being  
Of beauty or of mirth left his abode  
Under the populous flood and journeyed with them.  
Out of their deep green caves the Nereids came

Again to do him honor ; shining limbs  
And shining bosoms cleaving waked the main  
All into sapphire ripples eachwhere crowned  
With yellow tresses streaming. Triton came  
And all his goodly company, with shells  
Pink-whorled and purple, many-formed, and made  
Tumultuous music. Ocean's tawny floor  
They all left vacant, empty every bower,  
And solitary the remotest courts.  
Following in the midst of the array  
Their mistress, her white horses paced along  
Over the unaccustomed element,  
Submissive, with the wonted chariot  
Pillowed in vapors silver, pink, and gold,  
Itself of pearl and fire. And so they reached  
Delos, and went together hand in hand  
Up from the water and their company,  
And the green wood received them out of sight.

## ARIADNE.

### I.

HUNG like a rich pomegranate o'er the sea  
The ripened moon ; along the tranced sand  
The feather-shadowed ferns drooped dreamfully ;  
The solitude's evading harmony  
Mingled remotely over sea and land ;  
A light wind woke and whispered warily,  
And myriad ripples tinkled on the strand.

### II.

She lay face downward on the sighing shore,  
Her head upon her bended arm ; her hair  
Loose-spreading fell, a heart-entangling store ;  
Her shoulder swelling through it glimmered more  
Divinely white than snows in morning air ;  
One tress, more wide astray, the ripples bore  
Where her hand clenched the ooze in mute despair.

III.

A wandering wind laughed over her, then slunk  
 Shamefast away, laden with her deep woe,  
 Smit with the consciousness that she had drunk  
 Grief's numbing chalice to the dregs, and sunk,  
 As deep as ever mortal soul could go,  
 To sleep's dim caves: while, like a wave-borne trunk,  
 Did her still body no life-promise show.

IV.

Then stronger stirred her pulses; and a sound  
 Of her deep-drawn and slowly-measured breath,  
 Now shattered by a gasping sob, or drowned  
 By sudden rustlings of the leaves around,  
 Told of her spirit driven back from Death,  
 Whom it had sought with forehead duly bound  
 With fillets, where the hemlock wavereth.

V.

A many-throated din came echoing  
 Over the startled trees confusedly,  
 From th' inmost mountain folds hurled clamoring  
 Along the level shore to droop its wing:

She blindly rose, and o'er the moon-track'd sea  
Toward Athens stretched her hands,—“With shouts  
they bring  
Their conquering chieftain home; ah me! ah me!”

## VI.

But clearer came the music, zephyr-borne,  
And turned her yearnings from the over-seas,  
Hurtled unmasked o'er glade and belted bourne,—  
Of dinning cymbal, covert-rousing horn,  
Soft waxen pipe, shrill-shouted EVOES:  
Then sat she down unheeding and forlorn,  
Half dreaming of old Cretan melodies.

## VII.

Like thought quick-frozen in the vivid brain  
At need of sudden, vast emergency,  
She sat there dazed and motionless; the main  
Sobbed round and caught her longest tress again,  
And clasped her shell-like foot, nor heeded she;  
And nearer, and nearer, like thick gusts of rain,  
The clamor swelled and burst upon the sea:

## VIII.

The thickets rocked; the ferns were trampled down;  
The shells and pebbles splashed into the waves;

The white sands reeked with purple stains and brown,  
With crushed grape-clusters and fig-bunches strown ;  
Hoof'd sylvans, fauns, satyrs from mossy caves,  
Fur-clad Bacchantes, leapt around to drown  
God Bacchus' voice, whose lip the crimson laves.

## IX.

His thyrsus, wreathed with many-veinéd vine  
That magically blossomed and bare fruit,  
He waved above the crowd with grace divine,  
And straightway by the silver waste of brine  
They laid them gently down with gesture mute ;  
The while he twinéd his persuasions fine  
And meshed her grief-clipt spirit with his lute.

## X.

These sweet entanglements he closely wove,—  
“ A god hath heard thy plainings piteous ;  
A god's deep heart thy shrill shriek shuddering clove ;  
A god hath left his incense-teeming grove,  
And sought thee by the chill sea's barrenness ;  
A god's strong spirit night-long vainly strove,  
And fell before thy mortal loveliness.

## XI.

“ Forget the subtle-tongued Ionian's love,  
His speech that flowed like honey, and his vows ;

Forget the deaf, black ship that fleetly drove,  
Leaving thee hopeless in this moaning cove ;  
Forget the Past's dumb misery, and rouse  
Thy heart and lift thy spirit clear above  
Dead griefs as fitteth godhead's promised spouse.

## XII.

“ And hearken, maiden ! I will love thee well.  
Then rise and follow, rise and follow, rise  
And give a god thine hand, and come and dwell  
With gods, and drink the purpling œnomel,  
And slake desire with aught that lures thine eyes,  
From flowerful hermitage in some green dell  
To sphere-realms in the star-entangled skies.

## XIII.

“ Rich largess of all crystalline delights,  
With converse of the well-persuading lyre,  
Shall satisfy thee of sweet sounds and sights,  
And each compelling beauty that excites  
A yearning shall fulfil its own desire ;  
And vintagers shall worship thee with rites  
Of wine outpoured and vervain-nourished fire.

## XIV.

“ And all these pleasures shall be sure for thee ;  
And woven through them like a golden thread



The certainty of one fixt love for thee,  
 And that a god's, shall bind them fast for thee,—  
 So fast that by no finely-stinging dread,  
 Lest they should prove some dream-wrought mockery,  
 Shall thy heart's joyance e'er be visited."

XV.

And so with silver-linkéd melodies  
 He wooed her till the moon lay pale and low ;  
 And first she lifted up her dreaming eyes  
 And dreamed him her old love in fairer guise ;  
 And then her soul drew outwards, and a glow  
 Woke in her blood of pleasure and surprize,  
 To think it was a god that loved her so.

XVI.

And last she rose up happily, and gave  
 Her hand to him, by sudden love made bold,—  
 The while the sun got up refreshed and drave  
 Square-shouldered through the lucent mists, that clave  
 To the clear-echoed inland hills, and rolled  
 Along their peaks in many a pallid wave,  
 Or floated coldly o'er the molten gold,—

XVII.

And went with him where honey-dew distils  
 Through swimming air in odorous mists and showers,

Where music the attentive stillness fills, !  
And every scent and color drips and spills  
    From myriad quivering wings of orchid flowers ;  
And there they dwelt deep in the folded hills,  
    Blissfully hunting down the fleet-shod hours.

## XVIII.

And who shall say her love was incomplete ?  
    For love fares hardly on ingratitude,  
And love dies quickly nurtured on deceit,  
And love turns hatred captured by a cheat ;  
    And love had died while in despair immewed ;  
And this god's love was surely very sweet,  
    For she was a forsaken maid he wooed.

# LAUNCELOT AND THE FOUR QUEENS.

## PART I.

Launcelot sleepeth under an apple-tree.

WHERE a little-trodden byway  
Intersects the beaten highway  
    Running downward to the river,  
Stands an ancient apple-tree  
In whose blossoms drowsily  
    The bees are droning ever.

Back along the river's edge  
Twists a tangled hawthorn hedge,  
    In whose thickets lurks the thrush ;  
Broods the skylark in the meads,  
Floats the teal among the reeds,  
    The warm wild-roses flush ;

The sundews clasp their glistening beads,  
The sun in mid-sky reins his steeds,  
    And languid noon enwraps the earth ;  
Scarce a living creature stirs,  
Save some gadding grasshoppers  
    That heedless prate their mirth.

'Neath the fruit-tree's latticed shade  
An errant knight at length is laid,  
    In opiate noon's deep slumber sunk ;  
His helm, well proved in conflicts stern,  
Lies in a tuft of tender fern  
    Against the mossy trunk.

A robin on a branch above,  
Nodding by his dreaming love  
    Whose four blue eggs are hatched not yet,  
Winks, and watches unconcerned  
A spider o'er the helm upturned  
    Weaving his careful net.

The sleeper's hair falls curling fair  
From off his forehead broad and bare,  
    Entangling violets faint and pale ;  
Beside his cheek a primrose gleams,  
And breathes her sweetness through his dreams,  
    Till grown too sweet they fail.

PART II.

And as he sleeps four queens come by  
And spy him 'neath the apple-tree.  
Of his fair show enamored sore  
They 'prison him by sorcery.

Hark, the voices blithe and gay !  
Four queens of great estate are they,  
And riding come they up this way,—  
Come they up from out the river ;  
On four white horses do they ride,  
And four fair knights do ride beside,  
As is their custom ever.

On upright spear each knight doth bear  
One corner of an awning rare  
Of silk, all green, and bordered fair  
With mystic-symbolled broidery ;  
And o'er the ladies' milky-white,  
Soft shoulders falls the tinted light,  
And nestles tremblingly.

Now come they where they well may see  
The blossom-veiléd apple-tree.  
Quoth Eastland's queen,—“ It grieveth me  
That on the branch but blossoms are !

If it were only autumn now,  
 And apples crowned the stooping bough,  
 I'd deem it fairer far :

“ Drooping so ripe and melting mellow,  
 Rind-streaked red and flecked with yellow,  
 Each one fairer than its fellow,  
     Oh, methinks I see them now !”  
 Thus quoth she ; but Morgane le Fay  
 Hath cast her eyne another way,  
     And peereth 'neath the bough.

“ Now swear I on my life,” quoth she,  
 “ Fairer fruit is 'neath the tree  
 Than e'er will be upon the tree.  
     See ye yon knight in armor black ?  
 Can looks so brave and limbs so strong  
 To any lowlier knight belong  
     Than Launcelot du Lac ?

“ Faith ! we the fairest knight have found  
 That ever lady's arms enwound,  
 Or ever lady's kisses crowned ;  
     Myself can wish no royaller lover.” . . .  
 “ Nay ! Think you then to choose for him,”  
 Quoth Eastland's queen, “ while shadows dim  
     His sheeny eyelids cover ?

“ Certes, ’twere discourtesie !  
But put a spell of secrecy  
Upon his drowsy eyne, till we  
    May bring him to our magic towers ;  
Then let him choose which one of us  
Shall deck for him the amorous,  
    Deep, blossom-scented bowers.”

They weave a spell of witchery  
Above his drowsy eyne, till he  
Is breathing slow and heavily ;  
    Then bear him homeward on his shield.  
His war-horse neighs behind the hedge,  
The duck drops back into the sedge,  
    The lark into the field.

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PART III.

He waketh in a chamber high,  
    With tapestries adornéd fair ;  
Unto a window climbeth up,  
    And chanteth unto Guinevere.

In place of green o’ershadowing  
    Launcelot sees above his head—  
And, smiling, turns his magic ring—  
A dragon fixt with brooding wing,  
    And dismal claws outspread.

He gives the ring a prayerful turn,  
    Which aye was wont to put to flight  
All lying visions ; but the stern,  
Black dragon's eyeballs seem to burn  
    With smouldering, inward light.

Now doth he slowly come aware  
    No glamour 'tis, nor painted dream,  
But oak, all carved with cunning care,  
And for its eyes a sullen pair  
    Of mighty jewels gleam.

From samite soft he lifts his head,  
    Instead of earthy-scented moss ;  
Four walls he sees all fair bespread  
With yellow satins, garnishéd  
    With legends wrought across.

Half-hidden by a storied fold  
    An archéd door he sees, shut close ;  
The sun, far-sunken o'er the wold,  
Through archéd windows sluicing gold  
    In sloping, moted rows,

Gleameth upon the topmost tier  
    Of armor on the farther walls ;  
Shimmers in gules and argent clear ;



Bathes the carven rafters bare ;  
Then seeks adown the ocean sheer  
    His sleepless azure halls.

Now paleth silver on the floor  
    In place of gold upon the roof ;  
From a young moon the still gleams pour,  
That from the sun, her paramour,  
    Yet walketh not aloof.

Where bars the window-niche emboss,  
    Launcelot, climbing, chanteth clear ;  
His song it floateth soft across  
The dreaming trees that fringe the foss,  
    And seeketh Guinevere :

“ Harken, Guinevere !  
    Hear me, oh, my love !  
Waketh thy soul wistfully ?  
    Hither let it rove ;  
Hither tripping swift  
    O'er the silvered meadows,  
With whispers for my prisoned ears  
    Fill the vacant shadows,  
                    Guinevere.

“ Harken, Guinevere !  
    Warm about my neck

Might I feel thy clasp'd arms,  
Little would I reckon  
Prisonment or chains;  
Bitterer bonds hast thou  
Link'd of rippled locks upon me,  
And I kiss them now,  
Guinevere.

“Hearken, Guinevere!  
Spake thine eyes in silence,  
As a stream that fareth softly  
Thorough summer islands;  
Uttered suddenly  
What I never guess'd,—  
How I could betray my king  
At his queen's behest,  
Guinevere.

“Hearken, Guinevere!  
Magic potenter  
Than hath brought me to this plight  
Hath thy bosom's stir;  
Subtler witchery  
Hath thy whispering,  
To make me foul before my God  
And false unto my king,  
Guinevere.”

PART IV.

The queens essay to have his love ;  
Denies he them disdainfully.  
A damsel comes and pledges her  
For service due to set him free.

A dewy breeze laughs through the bars,  
With meadow scents and early light ;  
And soon appear the ladies fair  
In silken vestures richly dight :  
“ The noblest knight of Arthur’s court  
We know thee for, Sir Launcelot !  
Who, save for Lady Guinevere,  
For lady carest not.

“ And now thou art our prisoner,  
And shalt lose her, and she lose thee ;  
So it behoveth thee to choose  
One of us four for thy ladye.  
And choose thou not, here shalt thou die.  
So choose : I am Morgane le Fay,  
Here Eastland’s queen, there she of the Isles,  
North Wales accepts *her* sway.”

Saith he : “ This is a grievous case,  
That either I must quit sweet life  
Or keep it bitter with one of ye ;  
Yet liefer will I death to wife  
With worship, than a sorceress,  
As ye are each, I’ll lay me by.  
What boots it that one’s body live  
An’ his dear honor die !”

“ Is this your answer ?” question they.

“ Yea, is it,” laughs he carelessly.  
Then go they sorely sorrowing,  
Leaving his spirit only free.  
And training that to lonely flight,  
He seats him on his couch’s side,  
Till scent and song are heavy-winged  
About the hot noontide.

A breeze slips in refreshingly,  
As slowly swings the oaken door,—  
Swings slow and lets a damsel in  
Bearing a most enticing store  
Of fare to cheer his sinking heart,  
And set his slackened strings in tune,—  
Collops of meat that taste of the woods,  
And mead that smells of June.

“ Ill fareth it with thee, Sir Knight !”

“ Ne'er spakest thou a truer word,  
Fair damsel,” saith he, heavily,

While up the walls the arras stirred.  
Saith she : “ This magic-bred mischance  
Shall vaunt not to have mastered thee ;  
I'll see thee clearly quits with it  
And thou'lt be ruled by me.”

“ What service wouldst thou ?” asketh he.

“ To help my father Tuesday next,  
Who hath agreed a tournament  
Him and North Wales's king betwixt ;  
For Tuesday last we lost the field.”

“ Fair maid, who may thy father be ?  
Needs is it that thou tell me this,  
Then will I answer thee.”

“ King Bagdemagus is his name.”

Saith he : “ A knightly knight, and true,  
And gentle ; by my body's faith

I will thee willing service do.”  
She turns, and lifts the trencher up,  
And seeks the door with paces steady :  
“ When dripping Phosphor flickers gray  
Be ready.”

## PART V.

When western folds are flocked with stars,  
And larks are quivering up the blue,  
Four clamped doors, eleven locks,  
And seven gates, she leads him through.

The blue has killed the gray ;  
White fleeces swiftly stray  
From the shepherd feet of day  
    Over their azure pasture ;  
To their morning baths address,  
The gusts with wrinkling zest  
Over the river's breast  
    Are following fast and faster.

The door swings open wide,  
And quickly side by side  
Adown the steps they glide  
    To an iron-bolted gateway ;  
What Magic makes Truth mars ;  
And through her fortunate stars  
These hell-forged bolts and bars  
    Open before her straightway.

She brings him to his steed,  
Hidden with mindful heed  
Where mossy foot-paths lead  
    From a broken pier on the river ;

He draws his saddle-girth,  
And tries his lance's worth,  
Then canters with lightsome mirth  
    Out from the thickets that quiver.

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In primal sympathy  
All nature laughed with glee,  
Shouted to feel him free,  
    Drank of his breath and kissed him ;  
Nothing of sound and scent,  
Color and coolness blent,  
Nothing the morning meant  
    In its myriad speeches missed him.

Over a knoll or two,  
Grassy, and drenched with dew,  
His blossomed pathway drew  
    Till a screen between had risen ;  
Then in his iron shoes  
He rose and waved his " adieus :  
" Methinketh neither I'll choose,  
    Nor die in your witches' prison."

## BALLAD OF THE POET'S THOUGHT.

A POET was vexed with the fume of the street,  
With tumult wearied, with din distraught ;  
And very few of the passing feet  
Would stay to listen the truths he taught :  
And he said,—“ My labor is all for naught ;  
I will go, and at Nature's lips drink deep.”—  
For he knew not the wealth of the poet's thought,  
Though sweet to win, was bitter to keep.

So he left the hurry, and dust, and heat  
For the free, green forest where man was not ;  
And found in the wilderness' deep retreat  
That favor with Nature which he sought.  
She spake with him, nor denied him aught,  
In waking vision or visioned sleep,  
But little he guessed the wealth she brought,  
Though sweet to win, was bitter to keep.



But now when his bosom, grown replete,  
Would lighten itself in song of what  
It had gathered in silence, he could meet  
No answering thrill from his passion caught.  
Then grieving he fled from that quiet spot,  
To where men work, and are weary, and weep ;  
For he said,—“ The wealth for which I wrought  
Is sweet to win, but bitter to keep.”

ENVOI.

Oh, poets bewailing your hapless lot,  
That ye may not in Nature your whole hearts steep,  
Know that the wealth of the poet's thought  
Is sweet to win, but bitter to keep.

## A BALLAD OF THREE MISTRESSES.

FILL high to its quivering brim  
The crimson chalice, and see  
The warmth and whiteness of limb  
Light-draped luxuriously ;  
Hark the voice love-shaken for thee,  
My heart,—and thou liest ere long  
In the close captivity  
Of wine, and woman, and song.

Though sweetly the dark wine swim,  
More sweet, more tyrannous she  
Who, till the moon wax dim,  
Rules man from east sea to west sea.  
And strong tho' the red wine be,  
Ne'ertheless is woman more strong,  
Most fair of the Jove-given three,—  
Of wine, and woman, and song.

But the rhyme of thy Rhine-sung hymn  
Is more sweet than thyself, Lorelie !  
As over the night's blue rim  
Thou chantest voluptuously ;  
So stronger is song for me  
To bind with a subtiler thong,—  
Her only may I not flee  
Of wine, and woman, and song.

ENVOI.

Then her must I serve without plea  
Who doeth her servants much wrong,  
Queen Song of the Jove-given three,—  
Of wine, and woman, and song.

## BALLAD TO A KINGFISHER.

KINGFISHER, whence cometh it  
That you perch here, collected and fine,  
On a dead willow alit  
Instead of a sea-watching pine?  
Are you content to resign  
The windy, tall cliffs, and the fret  
Of the rocks in the free-smelling brine?  
Or, Kingfisher, do you forget?

Here do you chatter and flit  
Where bowering branches entwine,  
Of Ceyx not mindful a whit,  
And that terrible anguish of thine?  
Can it be that you never repine?  
Aren't you Alcyone yet?  
Eager only on minnows to dine,  
O Kingfisher, how you forget!

To yon hole in the bank is it fit  
That your bone-woven nest you consign,  
And the ship-wrecking tempests permit  
For lack of your presence benign?  
With your name for a pledge and a sign  
Of seas calmed and storms assuaged set  
By John Milton, the vast, the divine,  
O Kingfisher, still you forget.

ENVOI.

But here's a reminder of mine,  
And perhaps the last you will get;  
So, what's due your illustrious line  
Now, Kingfisher, *do* not forget.

## BALLAD OF A BRIDE.

BRING orange-blossoms fairly twined,  
Fair-plaited wreaths to wreath her hair,  
Sweet-smelling garlands meet to bind  
Her brows, and be out-glistened there ;  
Bring radiant blooms and jewels rare  
Against the happy bridal day ;—  
A sound of parting thrills the air :—  
Hearken a little to my lay.

Now, blossoms shine, but ye shall find  
Beside her brow ye are not fair ;  
Breathe sweetly an' ye have a mind,  
But with her breath can ye compare ?  
Bright garlands, ye less lovely are,  
Nathless adorn her while ye may,—  
Even now her thoughts are elsewhere :—  
Hearken a little to my lay.

Now hasten, maids ; the flowérs wind  
    Amidst her hair with loving care ;  
Wind roses, for their red consigned  
    Beside her blushes to despair,  
    Such happy beauty doth she wear ;  
But haste,—her glad feet scarce will stay,  
    Nor us she heeds, for *he* is near:—  
Hearken a little to my lay.

ENVOI.

He comes, they go, a blissful pair ;  
    Full willingly she speeds away ;  
Full lightly heeds she this my prayer,—  
    Hearken a little to my lay.

## LOVE-DAYS.

THE sweet-mouthed shore hath wed the singing sea,  
And winds are joyous with their kissing chime.  
The voice-beseeching rapture of the time  
An utterance hath found in every tree,  
In bursts of happy rhyme.

All nature loves, and loves are all fulfilled.  
Me only hope deferred and waitings long  
Keep silent ; me these rich completions wrong :  
Ah ! when shall I have leave my lips to gild  
With a sweet marriage-song ?

From scenes of glad love crownéd, long gone down  
The droning-billowed reaches of the years,  
The lotus-flutes are shrilling in mine ears,  
And torches flash into mine eyes, and drown  
Their sight in envious tears.



All lovers surely now are satisfied,  
Save only we, whom yet no threshold waits,  
For whom not yet the inner temple's gates  
Have lifted : how much longer must we bide,  
Pressing reluctant fates ?

Oh, too long tarryings make a weary way !  
Then kiss me, Love, and kiss me ; for the wings  
Of time are ever dropping divers things ;  
And who may from the promise of to-day  
Guess what the morrow brings !

## MEMNON.

### I.

WEARY, forsaken by fair, fickle sleep,  
A traveller rose, and stood outside his tent,  
That shrouded was in dusky shadows deep,  
By palm-trees cast that o'er it kindly leant.  
A low moon lingered o'er a large extent  
Of lifeless, shifting sands ; her pallid rays  
Had kissed the scorched waste to sweet content ;  
And now her farewells whispering, still she stays,  
As loth to leave the land to Phœbus' fiery blaze.

### II.

Slowly she sinks ; and faint streaks quietly creep  
Up from the east into the dusky sky ;  
Aurora's yellow hair, that up the steep  
Streams to the rear of night full breezily,  
Shaken from her flushed fingers that now dye

The under-heavens crimson ; now she springs  
Full-blown before the Day, and hastens by  
With silver-footed speed and yearning wings,  
To kiss a form of stone that at her coming sings.

## III.

Thrilled at the voice the traveller starts aside,  
And sees the image, prostrate, half enwound  
With red, unstable sand-wreaths, and its wide  
Forehead, and lips that moved not with their sound  
Celestial, lined with many a furrowed wound,  
Deep-graven by the gnawing desert blast :  
Half-buried sphinxes strewed the waste around,  
And human-headed bulls, now mouldering fast,—  
Their impious shapes half gone, their greatness wholly  
past.

## IV.

Out of this desolation vast and dead,  
Now glorified and clothed in red and gold,—  
Brightness befitting Egypt's hero's bed,—  
A matin to his goddess mother rolled  
From dawn-kissed lips, that also kissed the mould  
Of their decaying substance. The sweet psalm  
Thrilled in the listener's ears, with manifold  
Cool music mingled of the murmuring palm ;  
And accents large and sad deepened the lifeless calm.

## V.

“Sweet mother, stay ; thy son requireth thee !  
All day the sun, with massive, maddening glare,  
Beats on my weary brow and tortures me.  
All day the pitiless sand-blasts gnaw and wear  
Deep furrows in my lidless eyes and bare.  
All day the palms stand up and mock at me,  
And drop cool shade over the dead bones there,  
And voiceless stones, that crave no canopy :  
O beautiful mother, stay ; ’tis thy son prayeth thee.

## VI.

“O mother, stay ; thy son’s heart needeth thee !  
The night is kind, and fans me with her sighs,  
But knoweth not nor feeleth sad for me.  
Hyenas come and laugh into my eyes,  
The weak bats fret me with their small, shrill cries,  
And toads and lizards crawl in slimy glee.  
Thou comest—and my tortures dost surprise—  
And fondlest me with fresh hands tearfully.  
O dewy-lipped mother, stay ; thy son desireth thee.

## VII.

“O mother, why so quickly wouldst thou flee ?  
Let Echo leave her mountain rocks and twine  
My words with triple strength to cling to thee

And clog thy limbs from flight as with strong wine ;  
 Let them recall sweet memories of thine,  
 Of how the long-shadowed towers of wind-swept Troy  
 Were dear to thee, and near, whilst thou didst pine  
 For the god-faced Tithonus, and the joy  
 Thou drank'st when thou hadst gained the willing,  
 kingly boy.

## VIII.

“ O mother, how Scamander chided thee,  
 And swelled his tawny floods with grief for him,  
 And drowned his oozy rushes by the sea ;  
 For often have I heard such tales from him,  
 Thou listening, whilst the purple night did swim  
 Reluctant past, and young Æmathion hung  
 Upon thy wealthy bosom ; music, dim  
 In ears not all divine, the nigh stars sung,  
 Of thine high origin Hyperion's courts among.

## IX.

“ O mother, what forebodings visited thee  
 From the Laconian's ravish'd bridal bed ;  
 What mists of future tears half blinded thee  
 When Ilion's god-built gates, wide-openéd,  
 Let in the fatal Spartan woman wed  
 To Troy in flames, dogs gorged with Trojan slain,  
 And tears of thine, mother, for thy son dead.

Dead ; would my soul were with the body slain,  
Nor stony-fetter'd here upon this Theban plain !

## x.

“ O mother, what glooms darkened down on thee,  
And tearful fears made thy scared eyelids red,  
When me thou sawest by some god's enmity  
Madly to meet Pelides' fury led,  
Sparing the agéd Nestor's childless head  
By me made childless. On the Phrygian plain,  
Between the bright-eyed Greeks and Trojans bred  
Warriors, I met the Phthian ash in vain,  
Which bade my breast's bright wine the trampled  
stubble stain.

## xi.

“ Then, mother, weeping, thou to Jove didst flee,  
And wring thy fingers, and, a suppliant,  
Didst kneel before him, grasping his great knee  
And awful beard, and clinging like a plant  
Of ivy to an oak, till he should grant  
Peculiar honors, not vouchsafed before,  
To thy son's obsequies ; nor didst thou pant  
And pray in vain, and kiss his beard all hoar,  
And large ambrosial locks that veiled the sapphire  
floor.

## XII.

“ For, mother, when the ruddy-bosomed sea  
Had drunk its fill of fire, and, climbing high,  
Smoke of my funeral-pyre, with savory  
Odors of oil and honey, ’riched the sky,  
Out of the seething flames a cloud did fly  
Of shrill-voiced birds,—like swarms of swarthy bees  
That move their household gods in young July,—  
And, screaming, fought and perished, to appease  
My manes and fulfil impelling Jove’s decrees.

## XIII.

“ O mother, hath my song no charm for thee,  
To hamper thee from flight? Thou then didst wait  
Scarce till the lustral drops were dry for me,  
And embers parch’d with dark wine satiate ;  
But wast away through the Hesperean gate  
To mourn o’er waters Atlantean. Now  
Thy loose locks trailéd are in golden state  
Down the far side of yon keen peaks of snow ;  
The brazen sun hath come, and beareth on my brow.

## XIV.

“ Soon will for me the many-spangled night  
Rise, and reel round, and tremble toward the verge ;  
Soon will the sacred Ibis her weird flight  
Wing from the fens where shore and river merge,

With long-drawn sobbings of the reed-choked surge.  
The scant-voiced ghosts, in wavering revelry  
For Thebes' dead glory, gibber a fitful dirge:  
Would thou wert here, mother, to bid them flee!  
O beautiful mother, hear; thy chained son calleth  
thee."



RONDEAU.—“HESPER APPEARS.”

HESPER appears when flowing gales  
Have filled the sunset's fervid sails,  
    When down the low dim orient hills  
    The purple gloaming soft distils  
To nestle in the crooning vales.

To fretted hearts whom want assails,  
Whom Youth, nor Hope, nor Love avails  
    To loose their wearying load of ills,  
    Hesper appears,

Lifting the sordid dusty veils  
That wrap us till our courage fails:  
    Ah, vexéd hearts! The hour fulfils  
    Your yearnings with its peace, and stills  
Awhile man's myriad fretful wails,—  
    Hesper appears.

RONDEAU.—“WITHOUT ONE KISS.”

WITHOUT one kiss she's gone away,  
And stol'n the brightness out of day;  
    With scornful lips and haughty brow  
    She's left me melancholy now,  
In spite of all that I could say.

And so, to guess as best I may  
What angered her, awhile I stay  
    Beneath this blown acacia bough,  
    Without one kiss ;

Yet all my wildered brain can pay  
My questioning, is but to pray  
    Persuasion may my speech endow,  
    And Love may never more allow  
My injured sweet to sail away  
    Without one kiss.

## RONDEAU TO A. W. STRATON.

(Written in his autograph album.)

To fledge the hours with mirth and ease  
And wing their feet with pleasantries,  
    Till heedlessly they hasten by  
    As cloudlets down the summer sky,  
Or bats mid twilight shadowed trees,

Or petals on the noontide breeze,  
Full oft our laboring minds should please.  
    So now to you I come to try  
    To fledge the hours.

And oft when they shall seem to lie  
    Wingless and footless, we may buy  
Wings for them from such names as these,  
And happy-colored feathers seize  
From their upspringing memories  
    To fledge the hours.

## THE FLIGHT.

SHE rose in the night and fled ;  
Such a night there was never another.  
And her small hands shewed they red ?  
What need ! It is cleanly to smother.  
In warm arms sleeps the young wife,  
And he fondles her,—“ Love ! my life ! ”—  
Ha ! ha ! but the child lies dead—  
Sweet dreams to you, father and mother !

Her hair streams out on the wind,  
The tree-tops wail and mutter,  
The dry leaves patter behind,  
And before the gray bats flutter ;  
Three crows are hastening after,—  
But whence is that flying laughter ?  
She knows not, following blind,  
Nor heeds what the voices utter.

Down the long, moon-lighted glades  
Where the pale ghosts moan and shiver,  
Through writhen, poisonous shades  
Where the night-shades heavily quiver ;  
Where the reeking hollows are mute  
She treads down the toad and the newt,  
And thro' hemlock, sweet when love fades,  
She hastens, and rests not ever.

Shun yon thicket of grass!—  
A body lies there forgotten.  
Strange it should come to pass  
Before the body is rotten.  
They have crushed his head with a stone—  
“Ha! ha! I am not alone.”  
And she flies; while up the morass  
Roll the night-mists swamp-begotten.

Her light feet scale the crags  
Where the wild-goat scarce could follow,  
And never her swift flight flags  
Till she reaches a yawn-mouthed hollow  
Where a goodly company feast—  
Of man, and devil, and beast,  
And by torch-light revel the hags,  
And the beasts they grovel and wallow.

She comes among them by night,  
Her long hair over her falling,  
Her white feet torn in her flight,  
And they gather around her brawling.  
They shriek, they applaud, they groan,—  
“Lady, we welcome our own.  
Come and feast, thou hast won the right,—  
To wake him will need much calling.”

## ONE NIGHT.

THE wood is cold, and dank, and green ;  
The trunks stand close in sullen row ;  
A crookéd moon through a creeping screen  
Of night-fog rots in the roots below.

The pool is thick, and dead, and green ;  
Its bubbles gleam the roots below ;  
To feed the slimy growths between  
The slimy roots the ooze drips slow.

My feet can find no standing-place,  
The monstrous trunk my arms grasp not ;  
Across the roots upon my face  
I fall, and pray my soul can not.

And one came by, and bare a load—  
An unstrange form—to where I lay ;  
Into the pool he cast his load :  
“Look to it,” he said, and went away.

The thick scum closed ; the body slid  
    Beneath the roots to where I lay,  
And rose face up : I fain had hid  
    My eyes ; their lids forgot the way.

And fain my hands had hid my face,  
    But could not quit their slimy hold ;  
Close to my face its loathly face  
    Uprose, and back its swathings rolled.

Its dead eyes woke and with mine met  
    Familiarly ; at that I wept.  
My tears fell big and fast, and set  
    More foulness forth the scum had kept.

And more I wept more foul it grew ;  
    All else grew black, and my heart dropped down.  
I had lain there for an age, I knew,  
    And must lie there till the body sank down.

Then One came by to where I lay ;  
    He had heard my tears and come to me.  
He had heard my tears (for I could not pray),  
    And pitied me, and had come to me.

He touched the body, and it sank down  
    Beyond my sight, though the pool was clear ;



And the space above was a sapphire crown  
Upon their heads, for the trees to wear.

He stood me up upon my feet,  
And the trunks were dry and my hands were clean ;  
The breath of laughing leaves was sweet :  
And he left me in this pleasant scene.

## A SONG OF MORNING.

WEIRD Night has withdrawn  
Her gleaming black tresses,  
And, sighing for sorrow,  
Has fled from the dawn,  
Sinking her sleep-woven wings in the west,  
To breathe there her kisses  
On tired hearts that borrow  
Her balm of sweet lethe and rest.

And Morning, upspringing  
From out the gray ocean  
With rosy-lipped laughter,  
Her yellow locks flinging  
O'er forest and fountain, field, fallow, and sky,  
With breezy, bright motion,  
Is hastening after,  
While vapor-veiled glammers sail by.

## ODE TO DROWSIHOOD.

BREATHER of honeyed breath upon my face!  
Teller of balmy tales! Weaver of dreams!  
Sweet conjurer of palpitating gleams  
And peopled shadows trooping into place  
    In purple streams  
Between the drooped lid and the drowsy eye!  
Moth-winged seducer, dusky-soft and brown,  
Of bubble gifts and bodiless minstrelsy  
Lavish enough! Of rest the restful crown!  
At whose behest are closed the lips that sigh,  
And weary heads lie down.

Thee, Nodding Spirit! Magic Comforter!  
Thee, with faint mouth half speechless, I invoke,  
And straight uplooms through the dead centuries'  
    smoke  
The agéd Druid in his robe of fur,  
    Beneath the oak  
Where hang uncut the paly mistletoes.

The mistletoe dissolves to Indian willow,  
Glassing its red stems in the stream that flows  
Through the broad interval ; a lazy billow  
Flung from my oar lifts the long grass that grows  
To be the Naiad's pillow.

The startled meadow-hen floats off, to sink  
Into remoter shades and ferny glooms ;  
The great bees drone about the thick pea-blooms ;  
The linkéd bubblings of the bobolink,  
With warm perfumes  
From the broad-flowered wild parsnip, drown my brain ;  
The grakles bicker in the alder boughs ;  
The grasshoppers pipe out their thin refrain  
That with intenser heat the noon endows :  
Then thy weft weakens, and I wake again  
Out of my dreamful drowse.

Ah ! fetch thy poppy-baths, juices exprest  
In fervid sunshine, where the Javan palm  
Stirs scarce awakened from its odorous calm  
By the enervate wind, that sinks to rest  
Amid the balm  
And sultry silence, murmuring, half asleep,  
Cool fragments of the ocean's foamy roar,

And of the surge's mighty sobs that keep  
Forever yearning up the golden shore,  
Mingled with song of Nereids that leap  
Where the curled crests downpour.

Who sips thy wine may float in Baiæ's skies,  
Or flushed Maggiore's ripples, mindless made  
Of storming troubles hard to be allayed.  
Who eats thy berries, for his ears and eyes  
May vineyard shade  
Melt with soft Tuscan, glow with arms and lips  
Cream-white and crimson, making mock at reason.  
Thy balm on brows by care uneaten drips ;  
I have thy favors, but I fear thy treason.  
Fain would I hold thee by the dusk wing-tips  
Against a grievous season.

## ODE TO NIGHT.

### I.

THE noon has dried thy dewdrops from my wings,  
My spirit's wings, so they no longer soar ;  
And, drooping more and more,  
I pant, O Night, for thy soft whisperings  
Of bounteous blessings which thou hast in store  
For me, and all who serve thee with due rites ;  
Not with a riotous loose merriment,  
That thy soft wrath excites ;  
But with sweet yielding to thy lavishment  
Of warm syringa-scented breathings, blent  
With trancéd draughts of subtle-souled delights.

### II.

Low-sighing zephyr, pulsing from the west,  
Before thee sheds earth-purifying dew,  
As priests were wont to do  
With lustral waters, ere the victims, dressed  
For sacrifice, felt the keen-searching knife.

Then, thy light-fingered forager, and rife  
With thefts from all lush odors and sweet sounds,  
He drowns on thy skirt ;  
Whilst thou, breast-full of new, sweet milk of life,  
Loosest the robe thy bounteous bosom bounds,  
With heart's-ease blooms and marigolds begirt.

## III.

Dear goddess, come. Thy feather-sandalled feet  
Tread out the dying crimsons of the day,  
Whose warm, red-spirited spray  
I'll find soft-changed to flushes rosy sweet,  
Dowered by thee to my love's lips and cheeks :  
My love, with whom is covert from the freaks  
Of Folly, so heart-vexing through the light,  
With whom a safe retreat,  
In whose dusk bower sour Envy never speaks,  
Nor poison drips from venomed fangs of Spite ;  
Thither, dear Night, we'll haste on happy feet.

## AMORIS VINCULA.

SUBTLER than all sorceries  
This tender breath upon mine eyes ;  
Surer than steel, though soft as air,  
These fetters of caressing hair ;  
Yet they gall not me, nor smart,  
Heart-fast to a girlish heart.

Wakes upon the quiet night  
Clamor of strife of might and right,  
And bears unto a girlish ear  
Vague messages of pain and fear,  
And girlish arms more close enlase  
To shield me in their weak embrace.

Ah, I too had girded me  
And stood among the strong and free,—  
Had struck, and shrunk not, for the right,  
Amid the red death of the fight,—



Had fought and won, or fallen with them  
That wear the hero's diadem.

I even now were smiting strong  
In the front ranks, to smite the wrong,  
But a girlish voice saith nay,—  
Bids me stay, and I must stay :  
Let Freedom rise, or faint, or fall,  
Here is my faith, my fame, my all.

## ITERUMNE?

AH me! No wind from golden Thessaly  
Blows in on me as in the olden days;  
No morning music from its dew-sweet ways,  
No pipings, such as came so clear to me  
Out of green meadows by the sparkling sea;  
No goddess any more, no Dryad strays,  
And glorifies with song the laurel maze;  
Or else I hear not and I cannot see.

For out of weary hands is fallen the lyre,  
And sobs in falling; all the purple glow  
From weary eyes is faded, which before  
Saw bright Apollo and the blissful choir  
In every mountain grove;—nor can I know  
If I shall surely see them any more.

## AT POZZUOLI.

AT Pozzuoli on the Italian coast

A ruined temple stands. The thin waves flow  
Upon its marble pavements; and in row  
Three columns, last of a majestic host  
Which once had heard the haughty Roman's boast,  
Rise in the mellow air. Long years ago  
The unstable floor sank down. Now from below  
The shining flood of sapphire,—like the ghost

Of youth's bright aspirations and high hopes,  
More real than castles in the air, and laid  
On some foundation, though of sand that slopes  
Seaward to lift again,—it comes arrayed  
In olive sea-weeds; but a raven mopes  
Upon its topmost stone, and casts a shade.

SAPPHO.

HER hair it floated fair and free  
In the blushful evening sky ;  
    The purple sea  
    Sobbed wearily,  
To the curlew's mournful cry ;  
    Her white feet mock'd  
    The barren rock,  
With their warmth and beauty and life ;  
    Her white hands prest  
    All close her breast,  
To stifle its bursting strife.  
    The musical sea  
    Sobbed musically,  
The warm wind whispered her,—“ Flee :  
    Counsel I thee  
    That thou warily flee  
    The fair-seeming snare of the sea.”

But deeper she drank,  
As the gold sun sank,  
The mist of the sea's purple breath ;  
While the sun's last embrace  
Lit flame in her face,  
And her eyes searched the shadows of Death.

But the shadows are driven,  
Like night-clouds riven,  
From her eyes by a heaven of song,  
That trembles and floats,  
In silver-lipped notes,  
From a light skiff drifting along :  
All the singers save one  
Full-faced to the sun,  
But the one to the rim of the moon ;  
And it seeméd the tune  
Was the voice of the moon,  
Or the moon the embodied tune.

O'er the tingling pink  
Of her eager ear's brink  
The golden melody swells,  
As a ripple's song slips  
In the dawn-kissed lips  
Of listening, mimicking shells ;

And chases away—  
So enchanting the lay—  
Her purpose and pain, forsooth,  
Till she sees the face,  
In the thin moon's embrace,  
Of the Mitylenian youth ;  
And the shadows return,  
And her drooped lids burn,  
And she calls to him under her breath ;  
Then leaps to meet,  
At the cliff's chilled feet,  
The hungry embraces of Death.

And the slumbrous sea  
Wakes tremulously,  
And thrills to his furthest streams ;  
And a sudden glow  
Through the depths below  
Gives the Nereids blissful dreams ;  
And the deepest sea-graves  
In Leucadian caves  
Are lighted with golden gleams,  
As though the sunk sun  
Had thitherward run  
To pry with his fronting beams.

And the musical sea  
Sings more musically  
Than he ever has sung before,  
And the whole night long  
His syrenal song  
Beguiles the soul of the shore.  
And at peep of morrow  
In red-eyed sorrow  
The Lesbian maids come by ;  
And search the sand  
Of the rippled strand,  
And the shallows remote and nigh ;  
But they see the maiden  
All tenderly laid in  
A coral bed deep from harms ;  
And for all their endeavor  
The sea will not give her  
From his encircling arms.  
Nor ever could they  
Have won her away,  
For all their Ionian cunning,  
Had not the sea-maids,  
In their emerald braids,  
Who were wont to sit a-sunning  
In the sea-monarch's smile,  
In their envy and guile

Upborn her again to the shore,  
Which shall gleam with the blaze of her funeral-pile,  
But throb with her song no more.

*Chorus of Lesbian youth, singing around the funeral-pyre.*

SEMI-CHORUS I.

Scatter roses from full hands ;  
Wreath bright garlands ; bring white heifers.  
Call sweet savors from far lands,  
Borne on wings of morning zephyrs.

SEMI-CHORUS II.

Burn, with olives' outpressed fatness,  
Riches of the swarthy bees.  
Bring to slake the thirsty embers  
Wine new-purgéd from the leas.

SEMI-CHORUS I.

Twine the voices ; wreath the song ;  
Weave a dirge of mythic numbers.

SEMI-CHORUS II.

Breathe it high and sweet and strong,  
For ye will not pierce her slumbers.



## CHORUS.

Jove-bestowed, thy passion'd singing  
O'er the Grecian nations came ;  
Was in Grecian ears a heaven,  
And in Grecian blood a flame.

Now thy songful lips are silent ;  
But thy deathless song shall dwell  
In men's bosoms, and its echoes  
Down far-distant ages swell.

And forever thy sweet singing  
Rich to hearts of men shall come,  
In its meaning and its music  
A full goblet crowned with foam.

Now the sea lies gray and chilly  
Under the wet streaks of dawn ;  
Now the dull red embers darken,  
And their glow is almost gone :

Quench them ; pour the last libation ;  
Slake them with red Lesbian wine ;  
In wrought brass enclose her ashes :  
Once more are the Muses nine.

MIRIAM.—I.

SAPPHICS.

MIRIAM, loved one, were thy goings weary ?  
Journeyed not with thee one to brighten thy way ?  
Lighted with love-light how could it be dreary ?  
    Was it not my way ?

Why wert thou weary ? All the golden glories  
Streaming from love's lamp thy enraptured sight won ;  
Sweetly we whispered old self-heroed stories,  
    Miriam, bright one !

Crimson lipp'd love-flowers sprang about us going,  
Clustering closely, rosy shadows weaving ;  
Straight from our footsteps glowing ways were flowing,  
    Vistas far-cleaving.

Silvery lute-notes thrilled athrough the noonlight,  
Flutings of bird-throats light as flight of swallow ;  
Scents rose around us thick as in the moonlight  
Leaves fall and follow.

How could I dream that thou wert growing weary ?  
Never I guessed it till I saw thee fading ;  
Saw thee slip from me,—and my way fell dreary.  
Cease thine upbraiding !

Cease thine upbraiding, ah, my widowed spirit !  
Trace on thy path by rays from backward sight won.  
More than I gave thee the bliss thou dost inherit,  
Miriam, bright one !

MIRIAM.—II.

CHORIAMBICS.

AH, Love, what would I give just for a little light !  
Cryings born of the wind wake on its undertones.  
Vainly praying the shore wearily all the night  
Round me the ocean moans.

Ebb-tides laden with woe flee with a wailful song  
Far down out of the dark, calling my trembling soul.  
Ah, Love, where is the light? Why is the way so  
long? . . .  
Hearken how sad their roll !

Ay, sad surely, but sweet ! Why do they always call,—  
All night through the thick dark calling me out to  
thee?  
Lured by surf-whispers soft, feebly my footsteps fall  
Toward the enfolding sea.

Nay! I cover my ears; 'tis not the way to thee.

Why doth it play me false now that my paths are  
blind?

When they lay in the light born of thy love to me,  
Never it seemed unkind.

Sweet it sang in the light, scarce could it dream a  
dirge;

Fringed with ripples of blue tinkled the strand like  
bells;

When, thy hand in my hand, crushed we along its  
verge

Pebbles and pink-lipp'd shells.

Ah! but full were the hours, full to the heart's desire;

Flowing over with love, golden their flying feet.

Deep and sweet was the air, shining and clear like fire,

Vital with balmy heat.

Warm,—but now it is cold; bright,—it is wild and  
dark;

Dimly over the sea lieth the gleamless pall;

Dimly out of the sea murmur the voices. Hark!

Do not they sweetly call?

Stay me, Miriam, Love ; chill is the drifting foam.

    Come, Love, meet me with strength ; fierce is the  
        moaning sea.

Peace ! peace ! vainly I call ; thou wilt not quit thy  
        home ;

    Wait ; I will come to thee.

## A BLUE BLOSSOM.

A SMALL blue flower with yellow eye  
Hath mightier spell to move my soul  
Than even the mightiest notes which roll  
From man's most perfect minstrelsy.  
A flash, a momentary gleam,  
A glimpse of some celestial dream,  
And tears alone are left to me.

Filled with a longing vague and dim,  
I hold the flower in every light ;  
To purge my soul's redarkened sight  
I grope till all my senses swim.  
In vain ; I feel the ecstasy  
Only when suddenly I see  
This pale star with the sapphire rim.

Nor hath the blossom such strange power  
Because it saith "Forget me not"  
For some heart-holden, distant spot,  
Or silent tongue, or buried hour.

Methinks immortal memories  
Of some past scenes of Paradise  
Speak to my spirit through the flower.

Forgotten is our ancient tongue ;  
Too dull our ears, our eyes too blind,  
Even quite to catch its notes, or find  
Its symbols written bright among  
All shapes of beauty. But 'tis hard,  
When one *can* hear, to be debarred  
From knowledge of the meaning sung.



THE SHANNON AND THE CHESA-  
PEAKE.

OH, shout for the good ship Shannon,  
And cheer for the gallant Brooke,  
For hot was the fight she fought  
And staunch the ship he took.

When the might of the land was astonished,  
And wreck on wreck had gone down,  
The old flag fast at the peak,  
But the old flag's fame o'erthrown,

Then Brooke in the good ship Shannon  
Set it forth in face of the world  
That "hearts of oak" still flourished  
To keep the old flag unfurled.

'Twas the fair-starred first of June,  
A day of glorious days,  
When York and Penn drove the Dutch,  
And Howe put the French to amaze ;

And out from Boston Harbor  
The frigate Chesapeake steered ;  
Not a sound save the wash on her bows,  
Till her crew broke silence and cheered.

In curt return from the Shannon  
Came a round shot over the rail,  
And sullenly, one by one,  
Fell the first of the deadly hail.

Then full in its blind, white thunder  
Burst the wrath of that iron rain,  
Sweeping the broad decks bare  
Till their timbers staggered again.

And the men crouch down for their lives,  
And the heavy pall of the smoke  
Is rent by the fierce, red flashes  
And the splinter's hurtling stroke.

Hot work at the belching cannon,  
In the sweat, and powder, and grime,  
Till the Chesapeake's steersman falls,  
And firing slacks for a time ;

For she drops afoul of our quarter,  
And her gallant captain dies.

Grapple now, for her mightiest bulwark  
Is fallen where Lawrence lies.

We swarm in over the taffrail,  
With hot strokes taken and given,  
And Brooke at our head, till the foe  
To the hold or the chains are driven.

We haul down the "Stars and Stripes;"  
But, oh, the grief and the woe!—  
A matter of twisted halliards,  
And the storm-worn flag *below*.

But it costs us dear, that blunder,  
For our gunner misunderstands,  
And Watt and five brave seamen  
Take death at their comrades' hands.

But, hark you, there is the summons!  
And sullenly they comply.  
Brave men; they fought till hope perished,  
But better surrender than die.

Now cheer for the good ship Shannon,  
And the good fight fought that morn,  
For the old flag's vindication,  
And its ancient honor upborne!

But woe must be in such warfare,  
    Though lost be the battle or won,  
For brother's slaughter of brother  
    And father smitten of son.

Pray God that England no more  
    Stand wroth from her daughter apart !  
Pray God one blood and one tongue  
    Be one in hand and in heart !

But let a great wrong cry to heaven ;  
    Let a giant necessity come ;  
And now, as of old, she can strike,  
    She will strike, and strike home.

## THE MAPLE.

OH, tenderly deepen the woodland glooms,  
And merrily sway the beeches ;  
Breathe delicately the willow blooms,  
And the pines rehearse new speeches ;  
The elms toss high till they brush the sky,  
Pale catkins the yellow birch launches,  
But the tree I love all the greenwood above  
Is the maple of sunny branches.

Let who will sing of the hawthorn in spring,  
Or the late-leaved linden in summer ;  
There's a word may be for the locust-tree,  
That delicate, strange new-comer ;  
But the maple it glows with the tint of the rose  
When pale are the spring-time regions,  
And its towers of flame from afar proclaim  
The advance of Winter's legions.

And a greener shade there never was made  
    Than its summer canopy sifted,  
And many a day as beneath it I lay  
    Has my memory backward drifted  
To a pleasant lane I may walk not again,  
    Leading over a fresh, green hill,  
Where a maple stood just clear of the wood—  
    And oh, to be near it still!

## TO WINTER.

RULING with an iron hand  
O'er the intermediate land  
Twixt the plains of rich completeness,  
And the realms of budding sweetness,  
Winter ! from thy crystal throne,  
With a keenness all thy own  
Dartest thou, through gleaming air,  
O'er the glorious barren glare  
Of thy sunlit wildernesses,  
Thine undazzled level glances,  
Where thy minions' silver tresses  
Stream among their icy lances ;  
While thy universal breathing,  
Frozen to a radiant swathing  
For the trees, their bareness hides,  
And upon their sunward sides  
Shines and flushes rosily  
To the chill pink morning sky.

Skilful artists thou employest,  
And in chastest beauty joyest,—  
Forms most delicate, pure, and clear,  
Frost-caught starbeams fallen sheer  
In the night, and woven here  
In jewel-fretted tapestries.  
But what magic melodies,  
As in the bord'ring realms are throbbing,  
Hast thou, Winter?—Liquid sobbing  
Brooks, and brawling waterfalls,  
Whose responsive-voicéd calls  
Clothe with harmony the hills,  
Gurgling meadow-threading rills,  
Lakelets' lipping wavelets lapping  
Round a flock of wild ducks napping,  
And the rapturous-noted wooings,  
And the molten-throated cooings,  
Of the amorous multitudes  
Flashing through the dusky woods,  
When a veering wind hath blown  
A glare of sudden daylight down?—  
Naught of these!—And fewer notes  
Hath the wind alone that floats  
Over naked trees and snows ;  
Half its minstrelsy it owes  
To its orchestra of leaves.  
Ay! weak the meshes music weaves



For thy snaréd soul's delight,  
'Less, when thou dost lie at night  
'Neath the star-sown heavens bright,  
To thy sin-unchokéd ears  
Some dim harmonies may pierce  
From the high-consulting spheres :  
'Less the silent sunrise sing  
Like a vibrant silver string  
When its prison'd splendors first  
O'er the crusted snow-fields burst.  
But thy days the silence keep,  
Save for grosbeaks' feeble cheep,  
Or for snow-birds' busy twitter  
When thy breath is very bitter.

So my spirit often acheth  
For the melodies it lacketh  
'Neath thy sway, or cannot hear  
For its mortal-cloakéd ear.  
And full thirstily it longeth  
For the beauty that belongeth  
To the Autumn's ripe fulfilling ;—  
Heapéd orchard-baskets spilling  
'Neath the laughter-shaken trees ;  
Fields of buckwheat full of bees,

Girt with ancient groves of fir  
Shod with berried juniper ;  
Beech-nuts mid their russet leaves ;  
Heavy-headed nodding sheaves ;  
Clumps of luscious blackberries ;  
Purple-cluster'd tracteries  
Of the cottage climbing-vines ;  
Scarlet-fruited eglantines ;  
Maple forests all aflame  
When thy sharp-tongued legates came.

Ruler with an iron hand  
O'er an intermediate land !  
Glad am I thy realm is border'd  
By the plains more richly order'd,—  
Stock'd with sweeter-glowing forms,—  
Where the prison'd brightness warms  
In lush crimsons thro' the leaves,  
And a gorgeous legend weaves.

## EPISTLE TO W. BLISS CARMAN.

September, 1878.

AN azure splendor floats upon the world.  
Around my feet the blades of grass, impearled  
And diamonded, are changing radiantly.  
At every step new wonders do I see  
Of fleeting sapphire, gold, and amethyst,—  
Enchanting magic of the dew sun-kissed.  
The felon jay mid golden-russet beeches  
Ruffles his crest, and flies with startled screeches.  
Ever before me the shy cricket whistles  
From underneath the dry, brown, path-side thistles.  
His gay note leads me, and I quickly follow  
Where dips the path down through a little hollow  
Of young fir-seedlings. Then I cross the brook  
On two gray logs, whose well-worn barkless look  
Tells of the many black-gown-shadowed feet  
Which tread them daily, save when high June's heat  
Scatters us wide, to roll in cool salt billows  
Of Fundy's make, or under hanging willows

Slide the light birch, and dream, and watch the grasses  
 Wave on the interval as the light wind passes,  
 Puffing a gentle cloud of smoke to scare  
 The sand-flies, which are ravening everywhere.

Such our enjoyment, Bliss, few weeks ago ;  
 And the remembrance warms me with a glow  
 Of pleasure, as I cross the track and climb  
 The rocky lane I've clambered many a time.  
 On either side, where birch and maples grow,  
 The young firs stand with eager hands below,  
 And catch the yellow dropping leaves, and hold  
 Them fast, as if they thought them dropping gold ;  
 But fairy gold they'll find them on the morrow,  
 When their possessing joy shall turn to sorrow.

Now thro' the mottled trunks, beneath the boughs,  
 I see the terrace, and the lower rows  
 Of windows drinking in the waking air ;  
 While future Freshmen stand around and stare.

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Last week the bell cut short my happy strain.  
 Now half in pleasure, half in a vague pain,  
 For you I undertake my rhyme again.  
 Last week in its first youth saw you begin  
 Your happy three-years' course with us, and win  
 The highest honors, half of which are due  
 To your own strength of brain, and half accrue

To that wise master from whose hands you came  
Equipped to win, and win yourself a name.  
But I,—I have but one quick-slipping year  
To spend amid these rooms and faces dear,  
And then must quit this fostering roof, these walls,  
Where from each door some bright-faced memory calls,  
And halt outside in sore uncertainty,  
Not knowing which way lies the path for me  
Through the unlighted, difficult, misty world.  
Ah, whither must I go? Thick smoke is curled  
Close round my feet, but lifts a little space  
Further ahead, and shews to me the face—  
Distorted, dim, and glamourous—of Life;  
With many ways, all cheerless ways, and rife  
With bristling toils crowned with no fitting fruit,—  
All songless ways, whose goals are bare and mute.  
But *one* path leads out from my very feet,—  
The only one which lures me, which is sweet.  
Ah! might I follow it, methinketh then  
My childhood's brightest dreams would come again.  
Indeed, I know they dwell there, and I'd find  
Them meeting me, or hastening up behind.  
See where it windeth, always bright and clear,  
Though over stony places here and there;  
Up steep ascents, thro' bitter obstacles,  
But interspersed with glorious secret dells;

And vocal with rich promise of delight,  
And ever brightening with an inward light  
That soothes and blesses all the ways that lie  
In reach of its soft light and harmony.  
And were this path made for my following,  
Then would I work and sing, and work and sing ;  
And though the songs were cryings now and then  
Of me thus singing in the midst of men,—  
Where some are weary, some are weeping, some  
Are hungering for joys that never come ;  
And some drive on before a bitter fate  
That bends not to their prayers importunate ;  
Where some say God is deaf and hears not now,  
And speaks not now, some that He *is* not now,  
Nor ever was, and these in fancied power  
See not the mighty workings of each hour,  
Or, seeing, read them wrong. Though now and then  
My songs were wailings from the midst of men,  
Yet would I deem that it were ever best  
To sing them out of weariness to rest ;  
Yet would I cheer them, sharing in their ills,  
Weaving them dreams of waves, and skies, and hills ;  
Yet would I sing of Peace, and Hope, and Truth,  
Till softly o'er my song should beam the youth,—  
The morning of the world. Ah, yes, there hath  
The goal been planted all along that path ;

And as the swallow were my heart as free,  
Might I but hope that path belonged to me.

I've prated so, I scarce know what I've said ;  
But you'll not think me to have lost the thread,  
Seeing I had none. Do not say I've kept  
My promises too amply, and o'erleapt  
A letter's bounds ; nor harshly criticise ;  
But miss the spots and blots with lenient eyes.  
Scan not its outer, but its inner part ;  
'Twas not the head composed it, but the heart.

## DEDICATION.

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THESE first-fruits, gathered by distant ways,  
In brief, sweet moments of toilsome days,  
    When the weary brain was a thought less weary,  
And the heart found strength for delight and praise,—

I bring them and proffer them to thee,  
All blown and beaten by winds of the sea,  
    Ripened beside the tide-vezt river,—  
The broad, ship-laden Miramichi.

Even though on my lips no Theban bees  
Alighted,—though harsh and ill-formed these,  
    Of alien matters in distant regions  
Wrought in the youth of the centuries,—

Yet of some worth in thine eyes be they,  
For bare mine innermost heart they lay ;  
    And the old, firm love that I bring thee with them  
Distance shall quench not, nor time bewray.

FREDERICTON, July, 1880.













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